

Message Text

SECRET

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14

ACTION PM-07

INFO OCT-01 EA-11 NEA-10 ADP-00 ACDA-19 DODE-00 CIAE-00

INR-10 NSAE-00 RSC-01 COME-00 L-03 SCI-06 AEC-11

NSF-04 GAC-01 SS-15 NSC-10 RSR-01 /110 W
----- 018239

R 240200 Z MAY 73

FM AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0981

INFO AMEMBASSY ANKARA

AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON

S E C R E T CANBERRA 2882

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: TGEN/ TU/ AS/ RP/ IR/ NZ

SUBJ: SEISMIC RESEARCH OBSERVATORIES PROGRAM (SRO)

REF: A) STATE 097615 B) STATE 094467

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: IN VIEW OF CRITICAL POLITICAL CLIMATE ON SUBJECT OF U. S. AND JOINT FACILITIES IN AUSTRALIA, EMBASSY RECOMMENDS THAT PRESENTATION OF SUBJECT PROGRAM BE POSTPONED UNTIL AFTER RESULTS OF ALP FEDERAL CONFERENCE IN JULY ARE KNOWN. WE BELIEVE PRIME MINISTER WILL SUCCEED IN DEFENDING THESE FACILITIES AT THAT TIME AND THAT APPROVAL OF PROGRAM AFTER JULY WILL BE FORTHCOMING. END SUMMARY.

2. EMBASSY HAS CONSIDERED AUSTRALIAN POLITICAL CLIMATE AND TIMING OF PRESENTATION FOR SUBJECT PROGRAM. ON BALANCE, WE BELIEVE IT WOULD BE BEST TO WAIT BEFORE MAKING APPROACH TO GOA UNTIL AFTER FEDERAL CONFERENCE OF AUSTRALIAN LABOR PARTY IN JULY. OUR ASSUMPTION IN MAKING THIS RECOMMENDATION IS THAT TIMING FOR PRESENTATION THIS PROGRAM TO GOA IS NOT CRITICAL.

3. AS INDICATED REF A, SRO PROGRAM IS UNCLASSIFIED AND HAS SECRET

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PURPOSE OF ASSISTING IN DETECTION OF BODY AND SURFACE SEISMIC WAVES. MOREOVER, IT HAS DIRECT CONNECTION WITH MONITORING OF NUCLEAR TEST BAN TREATY. SINCE GOA IS ALREADY PARTY TO WORLDWIDE NETWORK OF SEISMIC STATION AND TO LIMITED TEST BAN TREATY OF 1963, WE BELIEVE THEY WOULD FAVOR UPGRADING OF WWNSS STATION IN AUSTRALIA AS PROPOSED REF B. IN CURRENT POLITICAL CLIMATE, HOWEVER, AUSTRALIAN AGREEMENT TO UPGRADING OF THIS STATION LIKELY TO BE SLOW PROCESS AND REQUIRE SEVERAL MONTHS TIME.

4. WE BELIEVE POSSIBILITY OF TIMELY APPROVAL FOR PROGRAM MUCH BETTER AFTER ALP PARTY CONFERENCE IN JULY. AT PRESENT TIME, U. S. AND JOINT FACILITIES IN AUSTRALIA ARE BEING DISCUSSED OPENLY IN CRITICAL TERMS BY MEDIA. RECENT VICTORY BY PRIME MINISTER WHITLAM IN DEFENDING THESE FACILITIES BEFORE VICTORIAN ALP CONFERENCE APPEARS PUT HIM IN STRONG POSITION TO WEATHER ANY ATTACKS FROM THE ALP LEFT WING AT JULY CONFERENCE. WE WILL, NONETHELESS, BE DISCUSSING POSSIBLE MODIFICATIONS IN NORTHWEST CAPE COMMUNICATIONS STATION AGREEMENT WITH AUSTRALIAN REPRESENTATIVES IN JUNE AND THERE IS POSSIBILITY THAT PROJECT OMEGA WILL BE DISCUSSED PUBLICLY IN JOINT PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE PROCEEDINGS DURING NEXT MONTH OR SO. ALTHOUGH IT SEEMS THAT SRO PROGRAM WOULD NOT ATTRACT UNDUE ATTENTION IN AUSTRALIAN PRESS SINCE IT IS UNCLASSIFIED, THE POSSIBILITY OF ITS BEING SURFACED IN PRESENT CLIMATE APPEARS GREAT. FACT THAT ARPA IS AN AGENCY OF THE USDOD COULD BE USED INVIDIOUSLY TO IMPLY SOMETHING MORE INVOLVED IN SRO PROGRAM THAN IS THE CASE AND COULD BE USED TO IMPLY INCORRECTLY USG ATTEMPTING TO USE AUSTRALIAN TERRITORY FOR ITS OWN PURPOSES.

5. AS STATED IN FOREGOING PARAGRAPH, EMBASSY BELIEVES PRIME MINISTER WHITLAM WILL BE SUCCESSFUL IN DEFENDING U. S. AND JOINT FACILITIES AT FEDERAL PARTY CONFERENCE IN JULY. WHEN THAT HAPPENS, IT WOULD APPEAR THAT PROSPECTS FOR RAPID GOA APPROVAL OF PROJECT WOULD BE CONSIDERABLY ENHANCED. INTERNATIONAL, UNCLASSIFIED, AND RESEARCH CHARACTER OF THE PROGRAM COULD AT THAT TIME BE USED TO GOOD EFFECT IN OBTAINING THIS APPROVAL. ON ASSUMPTION THAT INSTALLATION OF NEW EQUIPMENT FOR WWNSS IS NOT REQUIRED DURING NEXT THREE MONTHS, WE RECOMMEND PRESENTATION OF PROGRAM TO GOA BE HELD IN ABEYANCE UNTIL RESULTS OF ALP CONFERENCE IN JULY ARE KNOWN.

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